

RIGHT WHALE NEWS

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PRESIDENT CLINTON SIDES WITH RIGHT WHALES, SUPPORTS SHIP REPORTING PROPOSAL TO IMO

On April 23, President Clinton approved the U.S. proposal to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to require commercial vessels over 300 gross tons (ca. 150 feet) entering right whale habitat off Georgia, Florida and Massachusetts to report to the U.S. Coast Guard, giving name, call sign, course, speed, location and destination. The report will trigger an automatic response from the Coast Guard with basic information on right whales and a referral to NAVTEX broadcasts for recent information. President Clinton noted, "This reporting system is essential if we are to ensure the survival of these majestic creatures."

In supporting the proposal, President Clinton overrode the objections of the U.S. Navy, senior Pentagon officials, the National Security Council and others in his administration. The military were concerned that the reporting requirement might reveal the identity of military ships. Others were concerned that other nations would impose similar restrictions. As noted in an editorial in the Boston Globe (4/23/98), the Navy's concerns were valid but could easily be resolved. Although military ships were exempt from the reporting requirements, the Navy's voluntary participation would prevent enemies from identifying military ships. A precedent would not be established by the requirement, for there are other whale reporting areas in other parts of the world. Wording in the proposal indicates that the reporting requirement is an extraordinary measure, also helping to reduce the likelihood of other countries' imposing similar requirements for trivial reasons.

The proposal to the IMO was developed by Dr. Greg Silber and others at the National Marine Fisheries Service in a joint effort with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the National Ocean Survey, the U.S. Coast Guard and the Marine Mammal Commission. The proposal was reviewed and endorsed by both the Southeastern U.S. Implementation Team and the Northeast Whale Implementation Team. The IMO is expected to start consideration of the proposal in July, 1998. Final approval could occur in December, 1998, with implementation beginning in July, 1999.

IWC RIGHT WHALE MEETING IN SOUTH AFRICA

(Editor's note: Two reports are presented here on the recent International Whaling Commission/MTN workshop on the status of right whales worldwide. The first, by Dr. Peter Best of the South African Museum and Convenor of the workshop, provides an worldwide overview of the workshop's findings. The second report, by Dr. Greg Silber of the National Marine Fisheries Service with some additions provided by Amy Knowlton of the New England Aquarium - focuses primarily on the Western North Atlantic population of the Northern Right Whale. It is important to point out that neither of these reports has been approved or sanctioned by the IWC, and the reports may contain personal biases. Copies of the complete official report are available from the IWC Secretariat, The Red House, 135 Station Road, Histon, Cambridge CB4 4NP, United Kingdom; e-mail: iwcoffice@compuserve.com)

**REPORT OF THE IWC/MTN WORKSHOP ON
ASSESSING THE STATUS OF RIGHT WHALES WORLDWIDE,
CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA, 16 ñ 25 MARCH 1998**

A special meeting of the Scientific Committee of the International Whaling Commission was held in Cape Town in March, 1998, jointly sponsored by a subsidiary of a local cell-phone company, MTN Cape Whale Route. The meeting was structured as a two-day symposium (open to the public) followed by a week-long workshop of invited experts. The forty participants came from eight nations, Australia, Brazil, Canada, New Zealand, Japan, South Africa, UK and the USA. The workshop addressed five main areas of interest (a) a detailed worldwide review of current information on right whale systematics, stock identity, historical and modern catches, biological parameters and estimates of abundance and trends, all based on information provided at the meeting, and leading to a population modelling exercise for the Southern Hemisphere; (b) a worldwide comparison of population status; (c) a detailed review of factors potentially affecting recovery; (d) consideration of issues related to whale watching; and (e) conclusions on the implications of all the above for management, and on future research.

A preliminary examination of mitochondrial DNA material from three ocean basin forms of right whales (North Atlantic, North Pacific, and Southern Ocean) gave results inconsistent with current taxonomy, supporting independent taxonomic status for all three forms. Further work was recommended.

The workshop recognized the following subdivisions of each ocean as separate stocks for management purposes; western North Atlantic, eastern North Atlantic, western North Pacific, eastern North Pacific, Brazil, Argentina, South Africa, Central Indian Ocean, Australia, New Zealand subantarctic (Auckland-Campbell Is), New Zealand-Kermadecs and Chile/Peru.

Calving intervals for southern populations have averaged between 3.12 and 3.64 years since the 1970s,

with no sign of an increase, whereas in the North Atlantic the interval increased from 3.33 to 5.67 years between 1985 and 1997. Ages at first reproduction for females were similar in both northern and southern populations, averaging around 9 years. Survival rates for southern populations (adult females) ranged from 0.978 to 0.99, and for the western North Atlantic (total non-calf population) was estimated as 0.969 (although there were some methodological concerns with this estimate). The authors of an analysis that predicted declining survival rates in recent years in the western north Atlantic were urged to continue development of their model to take into account inter alia the effects of age and sex on survival and sighting probabilities.

Population size estimates for southern right whales were based on adult females, of which the three largest populations were Argentina (330 females in 1990), South Africa (453-613 females in 1996) and Australia (220 females in 1995); making allowance for poorly surveyed areas, a total southern population of some 1,600 adult females was estimated for 1997. Modeling population structure using observed increase rates and biological parameters allowed conversion of this figure to a total population estimate of about 7,000 animals. In the western North Atlantic the total population size is only 300 animals (of which 74 are adult females), and even smaller numbers probably exist in the eastern North Atlantic and eastern North Pacific. In the western North Pacific a line-transect estimate in the Okhotsk Sea of about 900 animals (95% confidence intervals about 400 ñ 2,100) for 1989-92 was surprising, given the general perception that this population was at very low levels. Because the estimate was very imprecise, a recommendation for a further carefully designed survey was made.

Recent population trends were available for three southern populations (Argentina, Australia, and South Africa), and all indicated annual increase rates of 7.1 ñ 8.3% in the numbers of calving females. In the northwest Atlantic the situation was unclear: there has been no significant trend in the number of calves born since 1982, but an apparently significant increase in the number of reproductively active females in the population since 1985. However, this rate (3.5%) and an estimated maximum possible growth rate of 4.3%, indicate that this population, if it is recovering at all, has a much reduced capacity to recover from depletion compared to southern right whales (which also had to cope with substantial Soviet catches in the 1960s). The workshop recommended that, as a matter of urgency, increased efforts be made to determine the recent trajectory of the population.

The meeting attempted a preliminary assessment of the status of southern stocks. Given the 1997 stock size, and adopting a series of historical catches, a population model was used to simulate the trajectory of the population as it was subjected to exploitation. The principal constraint was that the trajectory had to hit the current estimate of population size. Simulations were carried out using the best estimate of current increase rate for the population (7.5%) as representing the maximum possible for the species, as well as other options (0 and 4%). For simplicity, the model was run for the whole Southern Hemisphere, without any distinction as to stock, and the catch was assumed to have been unselective as regards age or sex. Using the best estimate of current increase rate, the initial population size was estimated to be about 60,000 animals (or a range of 55,000 to 75,000 if uncertainty in the catch series was taken into account). Of interest is that this projection indicated a low point for the entire southern population of right whales of 300 animals in 1920 (corresponding to an adult female population of about 60). This is equivalent to 0.5% of original population size. Despite the current healthy increase rate, the 1997 population is projected to be still at around 10% of its initial size, but at the current rate of increase should double within ten years.

A large number of research recommendations were made at the workshop. Amongst these, high priority was given to the continuation of both demographic photo-identification studies and surveys designed to improve knowledge on absolute abundance and trends in right whales, and also to the processing and analysis of data arising from such surveys. The initiation or improvement of such studies in areas of identified concentrations where they are absent or in their infancy was also recommended, with high priority given to those areas where it is believed there is most chance of success. Stock identification studies, including genetic sampling where necessary, were considered of high priority where they were relevant for addressing important conservation questions.

The workshop investigated several factors that might be affecting the recovery of the northwest Atlantic right whale population. A comparison of genetic diversity with South Atlantic and western South Pacific populations indicated a lower genetic diversity in the northwest Atlantic, and some of the features being shown in the latter population (low fecundity and a decrease in the population increase rate compared to southern populations) are trends consistent with (but not conclusive of) inbreeding depression. Reduction in habitat quality could also be reducing fecundity in northwest Atlantic right whales, and the meeting was informed of recent developments allowing the measurement of blubber thickness in free-swimming right whales. Finally, several anthropogenic effects (chemical pollution, entanglements in fishing gear and ship strikes) were identified that could be leading to a higher mortality in the northwest Atlantic.

The workshop made several recommendations on the above issues. High priority was given to research that will lead to improved methods of reducing anthropogenic mortality (e.g. reducing ship strikes and fishing gear entanglements) for stocks where there is concern over their survival. Priority was also given to research examining environmental factors that affect fecundity and mortality rates (e.g. pollution, food limitation), and here it was considered that comparative studies between recovering (southern) and non-recovering (northern) populations might be particularly valuable. Two genetic issues of high priority identified were (i) the implications of the low haplotype diversity in certain populations, and (ii) the effective population size of right whales relative to current abundance estimates.

The concept of a Southern Hemisphere Right Whale Consortium, similar to that existing for the North Atlantic, was recommended by the Workshop for the Commission's consideration.

Finally, in identifying ship strikes and incidental entanglement in fishing gear as the most significant causes of human-induced mortality of right whales, the workshop made a number of management-related recommendations to the IWC. These included urging the Commission to make every effort to encourage member governments to adopt specific recommendations aimed at reducing the incidence of ship strikes and fisheries entanglements. Further recommendations relating to disturbance and habitat-related issues were also directed at the Commission.

This report was reviewed and accepted by the Scientific Committee at its annual meeting in Oman on 9 May 1998, and the recommendations adopted and forwarded to the Commission (which was still meeting at the time this report was prepared).

Dr. Peter Best

South African Museum

IWC RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FOR THE WESTERN NORTH ATLANTIC

The International Whaling Commission (IWC) recently sponsored a workshop and a special meeting of its scientific committee to make a comprehensive assessment of right whales worldwide. Dr. Robert Brownell of the Southwest Fisheries Science Center, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), chaired the steering committee for the meeting; Dr. Peter Best of the South African Museum served as convenor and local host. A number of U.S. scientists and managers attended the meetings, including Scott Kraus, Amy Knowlton, Phil Hamilton and Chris Slay of the New England Aquarium, Robert Brownell, Greg Silber and Steve Swartz of the NMFS, and Roger Payne and Vicki Rountree of the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society. The IWC is expected to publish a special issue on the workshop within the next two years. Some of the conclusions and recommendations for the North Atlantic population of northern right whales follow.

Workshop participants expressed considerable concern about the population, whose best estimate remains about 300 individuals. While the population may have increased since international protection began in 1935, and may still be increasing at a modest rate (about 2.5%) during the 1980s, more recent data suggest that this modest recovery rate may not have continued in the 1990s. Evidence includes the near-failure of calf production from 1993-95, an increased calving interval and a relatively large number of human-induced mortalities. It is now unclear whether the population is declining, stationary or increasing. The workshop recommended that as a matter of urgency, increased efforts be undertaken to determine the recent trajectory of this population. This would include further work to provide quantitative information on population trends and the use of more complex models.

The workshop concluded that any human-related mortality will be detrimental to the long-term survival of the population. Efforts to reduce human-induced mortality are the greatest urgency if the chances of this population recovering are to be maximized. To reduce the high rate of fishing gear entanglements, the workshop recommended additional research on methods to reduce entanglements, monitoring of both entanglement and disentanglement rates, the establishment of disentanglement training programs where appropriate and consideration of the prohibition of gear that entangles whales in high use habitats, especially in sanctuaries. To reduce ship strikes, recommendations included urging IWC member

nations to expand preventive measures (e.g., notices to mariners, early warning systems, sonar detection, acoustic deterrents, shifting shipping lanes and reducing vessel speed). The cooperation of the IMO (see lead article) should also be sought to provide protection for right whales including but not limited to ship reporting and ship routing.

The workshop also found that the population shows a significantly depressed calving interval and that the interval appears to be increasing. For the period 1986-1992, the mean calving interval was 3.67 (SE 0.11, with a range of 2-7 years); for the period 1985-1997, the calving interval rose from 3.33 to 5.36 years. Fecundity - calf production \bar{n} is also depressed when compared to Southern Right Whales. The participants agreed that inbreeding, organic chemical exposure and nutritional factors need further study. They recommended comparative studies to try to determine factors that may explain the difference between Northern and Southern Hemisphere reproductive parameters.

Participants expressed concern over habitat loss, recommending that the IWC Scientific Committee consider convening a workshop to develop approaches to quantify key features of whale habitats. Further, they recommended that comparative studies of Northern and Southern Hemisphere populations of right whales be undertaken to identify the most important parameters of right whale habitats. This would include developing standardized methods to measure the parameters and the assessment of threshold levels of disturbance (e.g., noise, temperature, food availability).

Information provided by Greg Silber of the National Marine Fisheries Service and Amy Knowlton of the New England Aquarium.

RIGHT WHALE RECOVERY WORKERS GARNER AWARDS

Seven individuals have been recognized recently for their work on behalf of the recovery of the Northern Right Whale. To borrow from a quote Stormy Mayo (Gulf of Maine Times, Spring, 1998, page 5), "Awards such as these hearten those who work in many ways to conserve and protect marine mammals by recognizing the importance of very direct conservation efforts that strive to save species from extinction."

On December 12, the Gulf of Maine Council announced that Charles "Stormy" Mayo was one of the Council's 1997 Visionary Award winners. Dr. Mayo was recognized as a leader in the field of marine mammal protection in New England for more than twenty years and the lead scientist for the Center for Coastal Studies in Provincetown. Among his contributions to right whale recovery is heading the Marine Mammal Disentanglement Network, which works to free whales entangled in fishing gear. The award,

announced by Trudy Coxe, the Gulf of Maine Council chair and Secretary of Massachusetts' Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, recognizes the valuable role that visionaries play in advancing the Gulf of Maine's mission to protect and enhance the Gulf's marine environment.

The Georgia Wildlife Federation (GWF) presented its 1998 Conservation Educator of the Year award to Sarah Virginia Mitchell in part in recognition of her work on right whales including the publication of an endangered species curriculum guide with poster and video "The Northern Right Whale from Whaling to Watching." Ms. Mitchell is the Education Coordinator for the Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary. GWF Chairman Ken O'Shields and Georgia Department of Natural Resources Commissioner Lonice Barrett presented the award in Atlanta on April 23. Copies of the right whale curriculum guide, poster and video may be obtained from Ms. Mitchell at GRNMS, 10 Ocean Science Circle, Savannah, GA 31411; tel. 912-598-2381.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration presented Hans Neuhauser with an Environmental Hero Award on April 18 in Savannah for his work on behalf of right whales. Neuhauser is the Editor of Right Whale News and a member of the Southeastern U.S. Implementation Team for the Recovery of the Northern Right Whale. He also chaired the NMFS Recovery Team for the Northern Right Whale. Reed Bohne, Director of the Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary, presented the award, which included a commendatory letter from Vice President Al Gore.

On May 7, the Southeastern U.S. Implementation Team for the Recovery of the Northern Right Whale expressed its appreciation to the U. S. Navy's Captain Bob Parlet, Lieutenant Pete Raup and Senior Chief Stephen Hahn for their development and operation of the "whale fusion center" at FACS FACJAX in Jacksonville. The center receives right whale sighting data from multiple sources and then distributes the information to those in need of the information. Among the many accomplishments of Capt. Parlet and his team was the reduction in processing time (from the sighting of the whale to the broadcast to mariners) from an average of 3 hours 35 minutes in the 1996-97 calving season to an average of 1 hour 9 minutes during the 1997-98 calving season. Capt. Parlet is retiring and Lt. Raup and Sr. Chief Hahn will be leaving FACS FACJAX for other duties this summer. They will be replaced by Capt. Jim Cannon, Lt. Joe Thomas and Sr. Chief Mike Stone. The Implementation Team also acknowledged the leadership of Mike Harris as chair of the team from its inception in 1994 through May, 1998. Mike is leaving the team to become Chief of the Nongame/Heritage Section of the Wildlife Resources Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources (2070 U.S. Highway 278, SE, Social Circle, GA 30279; tel. 770-761-3035).

NMFS THREE-YEAR FUNDING PLAN

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is developing a three-year funding plan for its right

whale work. Always uncertain of funding levels until approved by the Congress and signed into law, the agency is none-the-less proceeding to develop plans based on two scenarios: a \$1 million per year appropriation and a \$2 million per year appropriation. Presently, the NMFS gets a little over \$1 million per year for right whales. The plan distributes funds to headquarters and the northeast and southeast regional offices and science centers.

Under the \$1 million scenario, funding would be provided for ship reporting (see lead article), surveys, catalog and data base maintenance, genetics research, habitat studies including a workshop, field work, early warning systems, fishing gear research, disentanglement coordination and training, and VHF tracking studies. The \$2 million scenario would add a greater effort on recovery plan implementation, active and passive acoustics studies, research cruises to define habitat parameters and photogrammetric work.

A RECOVERY PLAN FOR NORTH PACIFIC RIGHT WHALES:

IS ONE NEEDED NOW?

In 1991, the Recovery Team for the Northern Right Whale recommended that a separate recovery plan needed to be prepared for the North Pacific population (sic) of right whales when more information was learned (NMFS, 1991, p. vi). Recent sightings of right whales in the Bering Sea (Goddard and Rugh, 1998; see page 12 for citation) and elsewhere in the North Pacific, combined with the results of analyses presented at the IWC workshop in South Africa (see page 3) indicate that the number of right whales in the North Pacific may be high enough to justify the development of a recovery plan for North Pacific right whales. The risk is also higher, with Japan, South Korea and possibly Russia expressing interest in resuming commercial whaling in coastal waters. The principal drawback to preparing a North Pacific recovery plan, as identified by the Recovery Team, is that it would siphon off limited financial and other resources from the recovery efforts for the Western North Atlantic population.

AUSTRALIA PROTECTS SOUTHERN RIGHT WHALE

The Australian government has passed endangered species legislation that protects all of its native whale species including the southern right whale, prohibiting them from being hunted, traded or transported elsewhere. The legislation requires that a whale recovery and a survival plan must be developed.

HIGH SPEED VESSELS POSE RISK TO RIGHT WHALES

For years, the ferry Bluenose carried up to 770 passengers on its trips between Bar Harbor, Maine, and Yarmouth, Nova Scotia. Depending on weather conditions, the ferry traveled at speeds of 16 to 20 knots, and the crossing took about six hours. The owner, Bay Ferries, Ltd., is replacing the Bluenose with a ca. 300 foot long catamaran that will carry 900 passengers across the Gulf of Maine in two hours and ten minutes. The ferry will run twice a day, starting May 28 through the end of October.

The speed of the catamaran, about 42 knots fully loaded, its ability to detect and avoid whales and its route through an important whale migration route has Canada's Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), the NMFS, the non-profit group, East Coast Ecosystems, and others worried. Unfortunately, Canadian officials are virtually powerless to regulate the ferry operations, for only a deliberate taking of a whale is against the law. Similarly, the NMFS has taken the position that it has no authority in the matter until a whale is hit.

The Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary hosted a workshop on May 11 to review and discuss the use of high-speed vessels, for there are now 21 high-speed vessels either in operation or on order in the region. The meeting was attended by representatives of Canada's DFO, the NMFS's Northeast Regional Office, the U.S. Coast Guard, Bay Ferries, Ltd., the New England Aquarium and other whale watching enterprises who are now or may be - acquiring high-speed vessels.

The workshop had a number of results. Vessel owners were appraised of the seriousness of the situation regarding whales. Their cooperation was sought, both with Canadian and U.S. agencies and with researchers. Researchers and managers noted how little was known about the issue, ranging from the role of speed in whale strikes to the acoustic effects of high-speed vessel operation to the visibility of whales from the bridge. Whale watch operators agreed to reconvene their group to discuss self-regulation measures. Bay Ferries, Ltd., has hired a consulting firm to develop a voluntary whale avoidance plan.

A workshop report is being prepared and should be ready for distribution this summer. To obtain a copy, contact Brad Barr at the Stellwagen Bank NMS, 14 Union Street, Plymouth, MA 02360; tel. 508-747-1691.

LARGE WHALE TAKE REDUCTION PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

The NMFS Northeast Region has been implementing the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan over the past nine months, based on an Interim Final Rule (Federal Register, July 22, 1997). Recently, Christopher Mantzaris, Assistant Regional Administrator for Protected Resources, issued a progress report that notes that the agency has been able to secure adequate funding to implement the key parts of the plan.

The Regional Office expects the Final Rule to be published in the Federal Register by the end of June. They also expect the Large Whale Take Reduction Team to reconvene in early fall to review the results of the gear research that has occurred, review the effectiveness of the educational and outreach efforts and discuss the need for any changes to the regulations and/or the plan strategy. For further information and for a copy of the report, contact Doug Beach at NMFS, One Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930-2298; tel. 978-281-9254.

REPORT FROM THE CALVING GROUND: THE 1997-98 SEASON

The 1997-98 calving season was a low whale season. A total of 48 individual right whales were sighted in southeastern waters by all observers. Six of the whales were calves; one of them was dead. (The 1980-1997 average is 11.39 calves per year with a range of 5 to 21.) A relatively large number of whales, 13, were seen in offshore waters (20-40 NM offshore), in contrast with the previous season's three whales seen offshore. One whale was sighted 74 NM offshore in 20.5 degrees Celsius waters. The first sighting occurred on November 26, 1997, the last sighting on March 8, 1998. Whales appear to have left the calving ground earlier this year than last (March 22, 1997). Whales also stayed farther north this season.

The abnormal year may have an oceanographic explanation. During the past two seasons (1996-97 and 97-98), all right whales sighted in the southeast have been in water temperatures of 20.5(C or colder, and all but one were in waters of 20(C or colder. In March, 1998, waters that were 20(C or colder extended much farther east and south than was the condition a year ago. Thus, this year's whales could have been farther offshore (as this season's sighting data suggest) and further south, outside the regular survey area. Alternatively, the whales could have been further north because the coldest water temperatures were off Georgia and South Carolina, also outside the intensively surveyed areas. The 20 (C waters, which can be detected by satellite as well as at the surface, may be a useful indicator of right whale distribution in the calving ground. Such information should be useful in focusing both survey and management efforts.

Report based on data supplied by Chris Slay and Scott Kraus of the New England Aquarium, Lisa Conger of the FL DEP & GA DNR, and Capt. Bob Parlet of the U. S. Navy.

DISENTANGLEMENT NETWORKS

Entanglement in fishing gear is less of a problem in the southeast than it is for the northeast. A risk exists, none-the-less, and right whales are known to become entangled in certain types of fishing gear in southeastern waters. To meet the occasional need, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is establishing a southeastern U.S. disentanglement network. The network will continue to rely on the Center for Coastal Studies (Provincetown, MA) to do the actual disentanglements because the work is both dangerous ñ both to humans and the whale - and highly specialized. Local first-response teams will be created and trained to assess the situation, notify the Center (their 24-hour a day disentanglement hotline number is 800-900-3622) and track the whale until the Center personnel arrive. The NMFS will schedule a series of training sessions for the first-response teams. Four levels of training will be provided. Level 1 calls for observing the whale, reporting and standing by the animal. Level 2 team members will be trained to take over from other observers, verify the species and if possible, the gear involved in the entanglement, serve as backup to the Center team (e.g., videotaping the disentanglement effort) and serve as a local knowledge provider. Level 3 team members can attach tags to the entangling gear, directly participate on-scene with the Center's disentanglement team and, in certain circumstances, conduct simple disentanglements under the Center's supervision. Level 4 team members are those individuals with more hands-on experience. The network and training programs will be coordinated by Blair Mase, NMFS Southeast Region Stranding and Disentanglement Coordinator (NMFS Miami Laboratory, 75 Virginia Beach Drive, Miami, FL 33149-1099; tel. 305-361-4586).

A similar program has been developed for the Northeast Region, with the focus on training Maine fishermen. Initial training sessions took place this spring. The NMFS Northeast Region Disentanglement Program Coordinator is Kim Thounhurst (NMFS, NE Region, One Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930-2298; tel. 978-281-9138).

ZOODSMA TO CHAIR SOUTHEAST U. S. IMPLEMENTATION TEAM

Barb Zoodsma, a wildlife biologist with the Non-game/Heritage Section of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, has been elected chair of the Southeastern U.S. Implementation Team for the Recovery of the Northern Right Whale. Barb is a marine mammal specialist. She received her M.S. degree from the University of Florida in 1991; her thesis was on manatee ecology in Georgia. She joined GA DNR in 1994 where her work on manatees continues to this day. Barb's work on whales includes serving as the state's marine mammal stranding coordinator and a member of the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team. She coordinates Georgia's involvement in the Early Warning System and right whale recovery. Included in these efforts is her work with port authorities developing informal,

voluntary protection measures for the right whale. Barb can be reached at NHS, GA DNR, One Conservation Way, Brunswick, GA 31520-8687; tel. 912-264-7218; fax 912-262-3143; e-mail: B
HYPERLINK mailto:barb@dnrcrd.dnr.state.ga.us arbz@mail.dnr.state.ga.us

The Southeastern U.S. Team also elected Cyndi Thomas of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection as vice chair. She can be contacted at FL DEP, Florida Marine Research Institute, 7825 Baymeadows Way, Suite 200B, Jacksonville, FL 32256-7577; tel. 904-448-4300, ext. 229; fax 904-448-4366; e-mail: thomas_ct@jax1.dep.state.fl.us

MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT TO CONGRESS, 1997

The Marine Mammal Commission recently released its 1997 Annual Report to Congress. It contains information on the Northern Right Whale, one of the Commission's Species of Special Concern and a focus of Commission work in 1997. During the year, the MMC continued to provide guidance and assistance in identifying actions to reduce ship strikes and risks of entanglement, as well as in establishing research priorities. Copies of the report are available from the Commission, 4340 East-West Highway, Room 905, Bethesda, MD 20814.

FLORIDA MARINE RESOURCES ATLAS CD-ROM AVAILABLE

The Florida Marine Research Institute (part of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection) has produced an Atlas of Marine Resources on CD-ROM. The atlas contains digital geographic data sets relevant to marine resources in Florida, including right whales. Base data include shoreline, bathymetry, seagrass distribution, aids to navigation, marinas, roads and county boundaries. The CD-ROM requires a computer system that has appropriate software to read ISO 9660 disks. For information and to order a copy, contact the Institute at 100 Eighth Ave, SE, St. Petersburg, FL 33701 or call 813-896-8626.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

July 10, 1998: Deadline for submittal of news and articles for the next issue of Right Whale News. See below for further information.

At press time, the next meeting of Northeast Whale Implementation Team

had not been scheduled. For further information, contact Dr. Sal Testaverde at 978-281-9368; e-mail: [HYPERLINK mailto:salvatore.testaverde@noaa.com](mailto:salvatore.testaverde@noaa.com) salvatore.testaverde@noaa.gov

October 22-23, 1998: Next meeting of the Southeastern U.S. Implementation Team for the Recovery of the Northern Right Whale. Location to be determined. For further information, contact Barb Zoodsma at 912-264-7218; e-mail: Barbz@mail.dnr.state.ga.us

May 6 ñ 7, 1999: Tentative dates for the spring meeting of the Southeastern U.S. Implementation Team for the Recovery of the Northern Right Whale. Location to be determined. For further information, contact Barb Zoodsma at 912-264-7218; e-mail: Barbz@mail.dnr.state.ga.us

RIGHT WHALE NEWS

Right Whale News is the newsletter of the Southeastern U.S. Implementation Team for the Recovery of the Northern Right Whale. The editor is Hans Neuhauser. The editorial board consists of Bill Brooks, Moe Brown, Scott Kraus, Mike Payne and Jerry Wallmeyer.

Current and back issues of Right Whale News are available on the Internet, thanks to Alex Score and the Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary. Visit their web site at: [HYPERLINK http://www.skiio.peachnet.edu/noaa/grnms.html](http://www.skiio.peachnet.edu/noaa/grnms.html)

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To subscribe (free!) or to submit news or articles for publication, contact the editor, Hans Neuhauser, at the Georgia Environmental Policy Institute, 380 Meigs Street, Athens, GA 30601. Telephone 706-546-7507. Fax 706-613-7775. E-mail: gepi@ix.netcom.com